CENTER LINE

A Publication of Waukesha County's Retzer Nature Center

Fall 2013

In this issue…

Upcoming Events:

* Bird Seed Ordering
October 1-31

* Retzer "Howl–O–ween"
October 18

* Bird Seed Pick Up
November 2 & 6

* Friends Photo Contest
November 3

Log on to
waukeshacountyparks.com
for more information.

RED, WHITE, and BLOOMING

As a child growing up in Bay View, a fresh suburb expanding along the lake, on Milwaukee's south side, there was an attraction to the wild flowers and grasses from the prairie. This attraction made quite an impression on my psyche, and my desire to prowl the prairies remains to this day.

A favorite prairie flower remembered from my childhood is the Firewheel (*Gaillardia pulchella*). Firewheel is a Blanket Flower of the Aster family. Habitat of this beautiful bloom is in sandy hills, dry plains and you guessed it – the prairie. This fancy flower that grew up long ago, in our small garden, turned out to be a true prairie flower. Blanket flowers have spectacular flower heads. Their reddish disk is surrounded by 6-16 petal-like ray flowers, of bright red, orange, and yellow. The central disk is reddish purple with an abundance of tubular flowers. Alternate leaves of the plant are usually toothed, or lobed, and hairy. They reach 4" tall. The annual plants grow to 2' tall. The Firewheel became popular plants among gardeners. They bloom May – August. That's one lot of beauty for a long, long time. An historical note of interest…the Firewheel became the state flower of Oklahoma.

An interesting colony- forming plant is the Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*). Wild Strawberry is a Rose family member. The white individually stalked flowers nestle in small clusters. Each flower is up to 1"wide, consisting of 5 green sepals, alternating with 5 small leaf-like bracts, 5 white petals, and 15 plus, yellow stamens. The stamen is the male unit of the flower. Stamens are long filaments with pollen producing tips. Strawberry plant leaves are divided into 3 rounded leaflets. They have toothed edges and wedge- shaped bases.

The plant grows 2-10” tall and the fruit is a tiny version of our cultivated strawberry. Discovering a cluster of wild strawberries can be a magical moment. They can be found in moist or well drained sites, in prairies, pastures, and open woodlands. The plants will gather in old fields of the Tallgrass regions. However, I must mention, the tiny red strawberry, is not a berry at all. It is the pulpy center of the flower. Each of its apparent seeds is actually a complete one-seeded fruit! A magic moment, however, is performed when eating.

An ancient legend was told, wherever a star falls to earth, these flowers will appear with their swept- back petals. The legend is referring to the Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon meadia*). They are members of the Primrose family. Smooth flower stalks of the plant grow up to 2’ tall from the middle of the cluster of basal leaves. Basal, used in this format, means at the base, or bottom of the plant, and always refers to the leaves. At the top of the stalk in a whorl of small bracts, from which a spray of individually stalked flowers springs. Each of the dangling flowers has 5 green sepals, hidden by 5 relaxed petals. Petals are light to dark pink, with yellow at the base. Petals are joined at their bases by a small yellowish tube. Five stamens project from the center of the flower. These have dark brown bases. These beautiful flowers with star-like qualities are common in moist to dry prairies. The shining stars are also quite versatile. They are able to reproduce seeds by self-pollination, thus assuring their species survival, even where insects are not on call. The plants can flourish in sunny grasslands, shady woodlands, and on mountain sides, and they will always look like flaming stars, just dropped from heaven.

Although she is not well- heeled, the White Lady’s Slipper (*Cypripedium candidum*) belongs in the elegant Orchid family. A most unusual plant, not very tall, less than one foot. Its leaves, three or four, arch upward and away from the stem. They are delicately pleated, about 6”long and 2” wide. Usually a single flower rests at the top of the stem, just above the leaf-like bract. The flower will quickly grab you attention, with a modified petal that looks like a tiny white slipper. The petal is less than 1” long, and sometimes marked with purple streaks and spots. Above and below the flower are 2 narrow, pale greenish sepals. Two twisted, greenish petals slant downward along the sides of the slipper. Sepals and side petals are streaked purplish brown. The odd little spippers can be found in moist prairies and fens. Slippers like to dance in calcium- rich sites of the Tallgrass regions. As dainty and appealing as this little flower is, it must outsmart the insects that it depends on for pollination. As there is no nectar made in the small pouch, bees and insects are attracted to it, only by a nectar-like scent from within the pouch. Once inside, the hungry patron can only escape through one of two channels at the rear of the pouch. He leaves with a back coated with pollen. Nothing like missing a good meal, and leaving a generous tip for his service in the Lady’s Slipper.

The Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) is a prairie member of the Lobelia family. The flaming red wands of the Cardinal Flower become an instant pleasure, when one happens upon the blooms in their natural habitat. They bloom from midsummer to early fall. Flowers are brilliant red and arranged alternately on small individual stalks, in a close cluster at the top of the stems. Each flower is about 1 ½" long, with 5 green, needlelike sepals at the base of a vivid red tubular, 2-lipped corolla. Lower corolla lip is 3-lobed, and the upper lip has 2 smaller, narrow lobes. Stamens and style are in a red central column. Plant leaves are lance-shaped, and toothed. This plant typically grows up to 4' tall. Its habitat can be found in marsh, meadows and open woods. In local prairie areas, they can be found in the marshy depressions of the prairie, and along the borders of the prairie streams. All lobelias bear tubular flowers that are divided into 2 lips, as mentioned above, upper one with 2 lobes-lower one with 3 lobes, and all have the 5 stamens united into a tube. Since the Cardinal Flower is the only odorless member of this group, the humming birds must aid in their rescue. Others in the Lobelia family will rely on the butterflies and bees.

One savvy early spring flower that has made a name for itself is the Large White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*). Trillium comes from the Latin name for three, and the grandiflorum has made an obsession over the number three. Formation of the plant, when standing at attention = 3 leaves, 3 sepals, 3 petals, surrounded by 2x 3 stigmas. The white petals are ruffled, and arise from a short stalk from the center whorl of three leaves. The early blooms will reach a height of 8-20". So look toward the ground if you wish to find them.

They habitate along rich woods and thickets. They probably will be working on their numbers. Although the flowers of the trillium species are self pollinating, cross pollination does take place, generally with the help of flies. Insects are attracted to the flower's offensive odor. In the order of things, however, the Large White Trillium is the least offensive of the group. The strongest smelling trillium in this family is *Trillium erectum,* who grows up with the name Stinking Benjamin!

Only one species of this next plant group is native to North America, and it is called Queen of the Prairie (*Filipedula rubra*), and as a Queen, she will have her say. The spectacular queen is a smooth plant that can grow up to be 7' tall. One of my flower books puts her in the Rose family – another lists her with the Meadowsweets. She will take this in her stride as high praise. The regal plant is a show stopper in any community. She spreads her rhizomes to form a good size clump. The plants have alternate compound leaves and large toothed stipules at the base of leaf stalks. Leaves are 2' long, divide into narrow irregularly toothed segments, of variedsizes, on the same leaf. The end leaflet is larger and deeply divided into 7-9 leaflet lobes up to 4' long. These can sometimes be further divided and lobed. Flowers branch out in spray-like clusters at the top of stems. The deep pink flowers are about ½' wide with 5 blunt, reflexed sepals and 5 pink petals surrounding many tiny stamens. The Queen will flower with all her beauty and charm. She displays her charm June – August, and graces her spaces of moist prairie, meadow and marsh.

Keeping with the red, white color cadence, the last prairie flower will be white. The forb is of special interest to me, and is mentioned in essence, in some of my prairie poetry. I had never seen this plant, neither in the wild, nor in a photo, but the name registered immediately, as I ventured through a magazine for ids, called, "Beautiful Discoveries". The magazine contains a photo, the prairie plant of many letters, is called Kinnikinnick (*Atctostaphylos uva-ursi*). "So that's what it looks like"! Most unusual. The white flowers which are shaped like vases, hang upside down, and in clusters from their brown stems. The top of the vase, which hangs upside down, narrows at its opening and the petal folds over slightly in sculpted undulating waves. The sculpted opening of the flower is a delicate shade of pink. If the flowers were standing upright, they would appear as delicate glass blown urns. The leaves of the delicate flower, however, have a tougher appearance. They are rounded and thicker, and have the hardy look of a succulent. The stems of this prairie plant looked branch like, dark brown and tough as nails. But how does this relate to my childhood. Would you believe that my home was built one block form the main artery, between downtown Milwaukee and Bay View, called Kinnickinnic Avenue. At that time, K.K., as we called it, was a red brick street, with streetcar tracks, that ran all the way to St. Francis. Historians claimed, the street was built over an old Indian trail, that had been a major southbound route along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The avenue was named Kinnickinnic, after a prairie plant, from which Native American made a tobacco, that was used in their ceremonial protocol.

Note: The spelling of the forb is slightly different on our street sign, than the spelling in the nature magazine. No matter, for me, this prairie flower is forever unique.

See you on the trail,

Shirley Blanchard

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Joy Publications, LLC, 8747 Lantern Dr. St. John, IN 46373

The Nature Conservancy News 1986, Arlington, Virginia

Special Thanks to ….

Maureen Hill from Milwaukee, WI donated a Spotting Scope to the Nature Center

Birds on the Retzer Prairie

During this past summer, once a week for four weeks, Larry and I (Travis Allen) have gone out to the South hayfield at Retzer Nature Center to conduct a bird survey of three important prairie birds that nest at Retzer- the Bobolink, the Henslow's Sparrow, and the Savanna Sparrow. There are many other birds in the area, but these are the ones that we were looking for. These three bird species are important because they are native birds of the prairie, an ecosystem that Retzer works to restore.

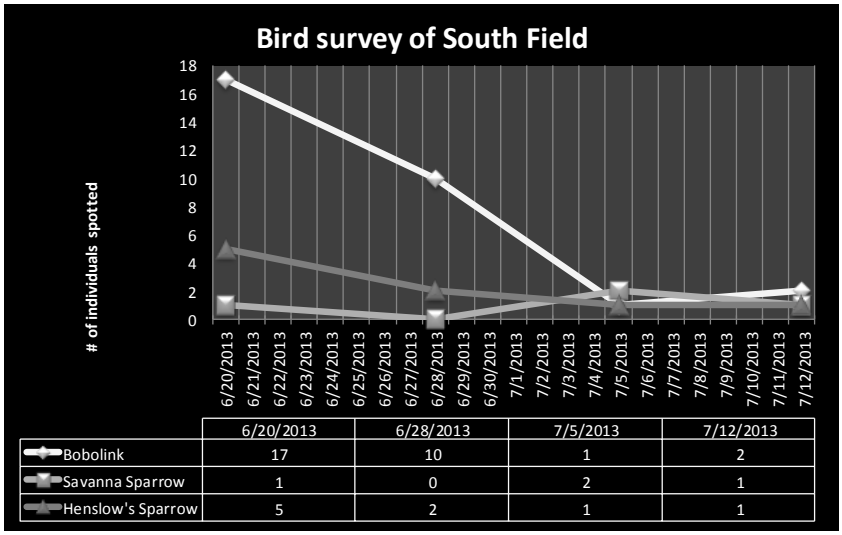
The Bobolink, for people that don't know what one looks like, is a member of the Blackbird family. The adult male is all black on the underside with a multitude of colors on its back/wings, which is highlighted with white, and has a fluffy, yellowish nape patch that sticks out like it's a sunflower. In comparison, the female is more bland with the coloring (striped/streaked with yellow and brown), since she has to be camouflaged while sitting on the nest. The Bobolink shows up at Retzer in early May from all the way down in Argentina, and the males get busy picking out their territory. There could be up to ten territorial males any given year in the field. The young, after they are hatched, leave the nest 11 days later, but take another 5 to perfect their flying. The main problem the Bobolinks have had is the change in the hay production practices. In order to get the hay at its peak, when the farmer would get the most money for it, the first hay cutting was in early/mid-June, which means that the Bobolink nests will not escape destruction. The Bobolink, despite it adapting to the diversity of the prairie and hay production, seems to be losing the battle.

We wanted to change that at Retzer, by having the farmer delay cutting until mid-July. This would hopefully give enough time for the baby birds to mature and survive.

The Henslow's Sparrow lives in the long grass-prairies of the Upper Midwest. This sparrow is short, small, and dark, with a large beak and a short pointy tail. The main way to identify this species is by the olive green head, OR by its call, which, if heard for the first time, might be mistaken for an insect. It sounds like the beginning of the sound a grasshopper makes- a "*tsi-lick*". Just like the Savannah Sparrow, it runs around on the ground. But, unlike the Savannah sparrow, it is harder to find. It tends to run away from danger instead of flying. The young Henslow's Sparrows are hatched 11 days after the eggs are laid. The young leave the nest 10 days after that.

The Savannah Sparrow is one of the most numerous songbirds in North America. It has a short tail, small head, and a yellow spot in front of its eyes. You can identify them by their insect-like call. They, like many grassland sparrows, run mouse-like across the ground, where it's almost impossible to find them when they are in the grass. But they are fairly common to find. Their call is thin and high pitched.

This past summer, Larry and I conducted a survey of these three bird species living in the South hay field at Retzer Nature Center. I wrote down the sightings, Larry identified the birds by their call/sightings, and we observed their behavior. We went out four times during the months of June and July, when the hayfield had not yet been cut (this is done around July 15th). We went out on June 20th, June 28th, July 5th, and July 12th. On June 20th, we identified 1 Savannah Sparrow, 5 Henslow's Sparrows and 17 Bobolinks (both male and female). On June 28th we identified 10 Bobolinks, 1 Henslow's Sparrow, and no Savannah Sparrows. On July 5th, we identified 2 Savannah Sparrows, one Henslow's Sparrow, and 1 Bobolink. And on the last day that we conducted the survey, July 12th, we identified 1 Henslow's Sparrow, 1 Savanna Sparrow, and 2 Bobolinks. While we were conducting the survey the first two weeks, we were seeing a lot of male Bobolinks defending their territory. We did this because these birds are indicators that the grasslands at Retzer has a diverse bird community, and re-creates prairie habitat.



	6/20/2013	6/28/2013	7/5/2013	7/12/2013
Bobolink	17	10	1	2
Savanna Sparrow	1	0	2	1
Henslow's Sparrow	5	2	1	1

It can be determined, by just the number of Bobolinks that were found each day, that the later the summer, the less likely it is to see/hear Bobolinks or any of the other two species. At the start of our survey, there wasn't a break in seeing Bobolinks. This, potentially, is due to the fact that the Bobolink's breeding is in May and the females are busy protecting the nest, and the males are warding off enemies from its territory. The females, which were seen less than the males, seemed angrier the second week, with more and more sightings of the females.

In conclusion, the South Hayfield at Retzer Nature Center is doing its job. We have more bobolinks nesting, and we have identified at least one pair of Henslow's sparrow that seems to be nesting here. All-in-all, it seems like the prairie ecosystem at Retzer is starting to get back to what it once was, back when there were only Native Americans living here, buffalo grazing and stampeding across the landscape, and the Bobolink, Henslow's Sparrow, and Savannah sparrow flying around, catching bugs and just being birds of the prairie.

Travis Allen

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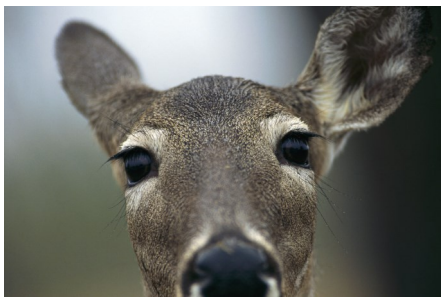
Ask the Wildlife Specialist–

By: Dick Bautz

Here are some questions that came my way within the past few weeks.



1. *White-tailed deer have been eating plants in my planted prairie. They seem especially fond of blazing star, New Jersey tea and New England aster, but they will eat almost anything available. Some plants are eaten right down to nubs. Is there anything I can do to stop this?*

Yes. The most effective method to curtail deer from eating your native plants, (or vegetable garden, fruit trees, or ornamental plants) is to fence them out. Most of the commercially available deer fencing is made of plastic, but is very effective. The fence should be eight feet high. The more expensive fencing is generally made of thicker plastic. Needless to say, some deer can be very determined, and a hungry doe with two
hungry fawns can rip a hole in the fence to gain entrance, and then rip another hole to exit. Using three or four feet tall chicken-wire fence around the outside of the plastic fence will prevent the deer from ripping through the plastic fence. Small plantings or individual plants can be protected by a circle of fencing at least four feet tall. Deer will not jump into an area less than six feet wide.

The next good alternative is to have a dog. Any size dog will do. The key component of this strategy is to have a moving and barking dog to trigger the deer's instinctive flight response. The deer's brain is hard-wired to flee from canine predators. It works every time. The deer's brain is also very astute to perceive if the dog's mobility is limited, such as a dog tied to a leash, or a dog inside a kennel runway. I have seen deer, with no apparent fear, feed quite close to a dog chained to its dog house. Over time they both get used to each
other. Deer entering suburbs to feed on ornamental shrubbery are masters in judging situations as either threatening or non-threating. For this method to be most effective, your fence should be large enough to protect your plants and have room to run for your dog. Any type of fence will do, from a white picket fence to a below-ground invisible-dog fence. Your dog needs the ability to roam freely day and night, but not be able to leave your property.

2. *With all the land in Waukesha County, why do deer come into my yard and eat my plants?*

This is an excellent question. First, deer are well adapted to living in close proximity to humans. Second, deer are territorial, that is, they defend a home-range. Deer live in a matriarchal social group. During most of the year (excluding winter deer-yards) the eldest doe leads her daughters and other does with their offspring. Neighboring deer family groups are seen as competition for resources, food and cover. The younger bucks form bachelor groups, and the older bucks are often solitary. Third, some of these deer home-ranges contain more food and cover than others. This is why deer seek out agricultural crops, gardens, and backyard bird feeders. If you were to fly over Waukesha County you would see that the really large green areas are few and most of the landscape has a fragmented appearance. There are large and small fields and woodlots that are often bordered by roads. There are long river corridors, but most of the land is developed for human use,
agriculture, homes, and industry. Deer habitat is fragmented and almost always has a strong component of non-native plants. Native plants (deer food) have been crowded out by more aggressive invasive plants. Deer can hide in honeysuckle, buckthorn and reed canary grass, but like many of the non-native plants, they offer no real nutritional value to deer. Deer eat the plants in your yard because they are hungry. Having worked for years on DNR State Natural Areas and Nature Conservancy properties, I see many rare

and endangered plant species also heavily cropped by deer, and in some sites, young oak trees are so heavily feed upon that they do not survive. As more and more land is restored to native vegetation, and more importantly the right plant community type, a better balanced and sustainable native landscape will benefit all wildlife and people as well.

3. *How can restoring native plant communities benefit me? Why can't we just let nature take its course?*

The proliferation of non-native species is widespread and is the driving force in the loss of native species worldwide. The loss of biodiversity weakens the sustainability of any environmental system. The escaped (and released) Burmese pythons in Florida eat everything from bobcats to alligators. This is both shocking and obviously bad for Florida wildlife. In 1905 five muskrats were introduced to Czechoslovakia. Within ten years, the muskrat population grew into the millions, and moved into Germany and Austria. When Charles Darwin visited the Argentinian pampas in 1748, he was amazed to find European thistles could be measured by the square mile. The North American gray squirrel was released in Europe and is currently pushing the native red squirrel of England into extinction. Simply letting nature, "take its course", does not lead to a healthy and stable environment.

Each native plant community type provides the right food and cover for the greatest diversity of species adapted to that physical structure and resources. Whether it is a prairie, a maple forest, a tamarack bog, or an oak savanna, it has stood the test of time since the glaciers receded. Native plant communities are sustainable and they support the right diversity of organisms necessary to maintain that community. This includes everything from the nutrient recycling and soil building organisms, to bumble bees, to the oldest oak in the forest. The direct benefits to us begin with clean air and water, wetlands for flood control, rich agricultural fields (most from former prairies), and the biodiversity of other species to provide the services of crop pollination, and the natural insect predators that reduce the need for pesticides, birds and mammals for seed dispersal, and carbon sequestration by forests and grasslands. Fish and wildlife continue to provide both recreational and nutritional value to the public, and more importantly, participation in the outdoors, whether fishing for bluegills, enjoying a sunset, or pulling garlic mustard helps to instill a sense of awareness and stewardship, and hopefully to an embrace of Leopold's Land Ethic.

Natural plant communities support the populations of many small and medium sized mammal species that serve as a dilution-factor to reduce the prevalence of Lyme disease in ticks, and thus reduce the transmission of Lyme disease to humans. For example, invasive species like buckthorn and honeysuckle reduce both native plant and mammal diversity. Deer ticks thrive in these disturbed habitats and it is not uncommon for 70% (or higher) of the deer ticks to be infected with Lyme disease. The White-footed mouse also thrives in disturbed forests, and it is the most important wildlife reservoir for the spirochete bacteria that causes Lyme disease. A mouse infected by a nymph deer tick stays infected for months, and passes the spirochete from one generation to the next. High quality native forests (mostly oak forests and savannas in Waukesha County) hold a greater number of mammal species. Many of these mammal species have an immune system that kill the Lyme spirochete quickly, thus breaking the infection cycle and diluting the prevalence of the disease in ticks down to 5% or less. Reducing the negative impacts of invasive species is a global problem. The time and effort put into restoring and managing native plant communities is worth it, and the more we can accomplish, the greater the dividends will be to our economy, health, and quality of life.

The Importance of Seeds

"Seeds are ever a positive and creative force"

This quote came from an old book about SEEDS – (the Yearbook of Agriculture 1961.)It has a lot of relevant things to say about the importance of SEEDS today. Reading this book helped me reboot my brain about the importance of SEEDS. Late summer-fall is the time of year I collect SEEDS at Retzer for restoration in the Waukesha county Parks. There is so much that stimulates my senses -the sights sounds, smells etc., that when I am walking around with a SEED collecting basket here I don't always think about think about important reasons for SEED.

SEEDS ARE:

- **A WAY OF SURVIVAL FOR THEIR SPECIES**
- **LIFE JACKETS FOR THEMSELVES (they have coats for protection)**
- **ORGANIZED(they have a plan on how to grow into a plant)**
- **VEHICLES FOR SPREADING NEW LIFE by the elements, people and animals**
- **FOOD SUPPLY for animals, people and themselves**
- **RAW MATERIALS for a lot of stuff. . food , products for animals and people**
- **BEAUTY in what they will become and what they are**
- **OBJECTS FOR PEOPLES CURIOSITY . . .**
- **ENEMIES (invasive, poisonous and get stuck on clothes)**
- **A WAY TO GET OUTSIDE when collecting them**

Janet,

Seasonal Biologist

Windhover

One day, there was a fine, westerly wind blowing across the state. Air pushed through grass, trees, under bridges, and over hills at a fast, yet pleasant pace. It was the type of day good for kites with long tails, held, and occasionally chased, by laughing children. The steady, kite-friendly breeze increased as it traveled up one particular drumlin bluff, racing along the top before descending into swirling chaos on the lee side. Near the top of that linear hill, at the height of the wind's power, hovered a small bird with sharp eyes. It held its position with rapidly-beating wings about eight feet off the ground for several long seconds. Finally, the wings stopped beating and folded inward as the bird began to plummet. During the short fall, it brought its left wing inward and down, while lifting its tail slightly up and to the right. Sunlight glinted off slate-blue as the aerial hunter turned, altering course faster than any historic or modern aircraft could manage. Legs came forward with talons extended just as wings flared. If the landing was a bit abrupt, it was controlled and smooth. For a moment, the once very mobile creature displayed inhuman stillness. After sufficient time, it cocked its head, almost as if in judgment. Then abruptly, it crouched and leapt, flapping furiously into the sky. Definitely a 'laden sparrow', the tiny falcon set course for its favorite power line to enjoy the rather large grasshopper.

Grasshopper Hawk is an affectionate nickname for our tiniest Wisconsin falcon. The American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) is the second smallest member of the *Falconidae* family in the world. Just for your information, the first smallest is **endemic** (found in a given area, and nowhere else) to the Philippines and is appropriately called the Philippine Falconet (*Microhierax erythrogenys*). It is a mere 15—18 cm from head to tail, and insects make up 99% of its diet (two thirds of those are Dragonflies—poor things). Interesting, but we definitely digress.

The good news is that our Wisconsin Kestrels are doing fine (although, they do seem to be less common here at the Nature Center). The Wisconsin Breeding Bird Survey shows a slight increase from 1966 to 2002 (Cutright et. al. 2006), and studies show that the western great lakes populations are stable (Farmer and Smith 2009). The bad news is that there is a significant decline throughout the United States as a whole. Some estimate that forest succession has dropped numbers; others believe that West Nile Virus is to blame; all agree that human population increases and development negatively affect these birds. This requires further study and definitely increased conservation. Thankfully, these pint-sized falcons are still a common sight around here.

Please note: common is very much a relative term. Predators are never really 'abundant' compared to most animals, but some are more common than others. American Kestrels breed in every county in Wisconsin, and often overwinter in the southern half of the state (Cutright et. al. 2006). They are even sighted during the winter in the northern half on rare occasion (Robbins 1991). Even so, they are considered migratory birds, shifting location with the seasons. They eat, like the Philippine Falconet, mostly insects. They really do pounce on grasshoppers! They like mostly the larger insects of course, eating beetles, caterpillars, dragonflies (poor things), moths, butterflies, and others. Occasionally, they are fortunate enough to capture a small mammal, reptile, amphibian, or even bird (Kaufmann 1996), which is a meal fit for Kestrel royalty.

The males sport the blue upper wings, contrasting with their **rufous** (reddish-brown) back and tail, where females are all rufous on top. You'll see them flying over meadows and fields, but never too brushy; these are typically grassland birds although they can make use of a surprising range of habitat (Sibley 2001). They are a classy species with impeccable taste, nesting inside homes where other, lowly birds, build a crude, roofless nest. Actually, any old cavity serves as long as it has the right dimensions and feel; even a hole in an exposed dirt bank will do. If you are kind enough to build them a home, they might very well move in and oblige you since they readily use nest boxes; just keep the Starlings away. Inside these homes, the female will lay four to five eggs and guard them while the male does most of the hunting. Double clutching is rare but can occur, especially if the nest is predated (Cutright et. al. 2006).

A side note: **raptors** (birds of prey with enhanced vision) have **reverse sexual dimorphism** (in most species, the male is larger but in RSD, the female is the larger sex). Kestrels are no exception, but the difference is not nearly as marked as most raptors. Why this exists is still a mystery. Ornithologists have suggested that this makes for a more agile male, making it easier for the primary hunter to provide food. Others hypothesize that the larger female can choose the best mate and literally muscle out any unwanted suitors. No matter what the reason, we now know why the male does the hunting—because he doesn't want to be knocked upside the head with a large, rufous wing.

You now know that Hummingbirds are not the only avian creatures that can and do hover. Kestrels are amazing creatures that deserve observation, if only to watch them live day to day. Windhover is a fine name, but although folks used to dub them Sparrow Hawks, I advise you to avoid those particular footsteps. These awesome flyers are not hawks (not that there's anything wrong with hawks), they are long-winged, fast-turning, speed-diving, death-defying falcons! And don't you forget it.

Happy birdwatching,

Mike

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RETZER NATURE CENTER

WAUKESHA COUNTY PARKS & LAND USE

S14W28167 MADISON STREET

WAUKESHA, WI 53188

Return Service Requested

Friends of Retzer Nature Center

The Friends of Retzer Nature Center is a registered, 501 (c)3, organization dedicated to encouraging, perpetuating, and promoting the work of conservation and natural resource education.

The organization seeks the involvement of the community in the form of financial and volunteer support to work toward the continued growth and improvement of Retzer Nature Center. If you would like to become a member or view some of our projects and activities, please visit our web site at http://FriendsOfRetzer.org.

If you would like to become a member of the Friends of Retzer Nature Center or find out more information about us you can check our web site at www.FriendsofRetzer.org.

Jerry Strom
President– Friends of Retzer

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